

AperTO - Archivio Istituzionale Open Access dell'Università di Torino

Review of: John Douthwaite, Daniela Francesca Viridis and Elisabetta Zurru (eds), *The Stylistics of Landscapes*, the Landscapes of Stylistics, John Benjamins: Amsterdam, 2017

This is the author's manuscript

Original Citation:

Availability:

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1712055> since 2019-09-19T11:48:49Z

Terms of use:

Open Access

Anyone can freely access the full text of works made available as "Open Access". Works made available under a Creative Commons license can be used according to the terms and conditions of said license. Use of all other works requires consent of the right holder (author or publisher) if not exempted from copyright protection by the applicable law.

(Article begins on next page)

References

- Boase-Beier J (2011) *A Critical Introduction to Translation Studies*. London: Continuum.
- Burke M and Emily TT (eds) (2017) *Cognitive Literary Science: Dialogues Between Literature and Cognition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Easterlin N (2012) *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Richardson A (2004) Studies in literature and cognition: a field map. In: Richardson A and Spolsky E (eds) *The Work of Fiction: Cognition, Culture, and Complexity*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Zunshine L (2016) Cognitive approaches to literature and Honglou Meng. *Cognitive Poetics* 2(1): 27–36.

John Douthwaite, Daniela Francesca Virdis and Elisabetta Zurru (eds), *The Stylistics of Landscapes, the Landscapes of Stylistics*, John Benjamins: Amsterdam, 2017; vii + 238 pp.: ISBN 9789027200020, EUR 99.00, USD 149.00 (hbk) 9789027264602, EUR 99.00, USD 149.00 (e-book)

Reviewed by: Teresa Prudente, University of Turin, Italy

The chiasmic title provides a very effective anticipation while also showing the focus of this collection: foregrounding (to employ a key term of the volume) the solid, consistent nexus between style(s) and meaning(s). The essays cover a wide array of topics, methodologies and aims, yet one of the strengths of the collection is precisely its cohesive nature, which establishes a constant interaction among the different pieces, thus achieving the most important objective for a collected volume – that of building the dynamic net of dialogic knowledge which constitutes the meaning itself of a cooperative work.

Certainly, this result is owed also to the genesis of the volume which, as explained in the introduction, is rooted in the collaborative work of the editors and authors on the subject, first via the organisation of conferences (Cagliari, 2005; Genoa, 2010) and then with the establishment in 2010 of a PALA Special Interest Group on the stylistics of landscapes, space and place (LAND-SIG), led by Ernestine Lahey and Daniela Francesca Virdis. This background is not only captured but also re-enacted in the way the essays resonate and engage with each other. The most explicit examples are the chapters by Katie Wales and Mick Short that, by focusing on the same text, involve the reader in the ‘experiment’ the two scholars performed for the 2010 PALA conference in Genoa. On that occasion, they decided to work separately on the analysis of Dickens’s *Pictures from Italy*, and independently arrived at conclusions that completed and corroborated each other. Thus, Wales’s analysis of Dickens’s description of Genoa singles out and examines four different typologies of analogies in the text, aiming to explore their effects on and functions for the reader. Wales’s point, relevant also to the discourse of tourism, is that Dickens’s analogies construct a pictorial image closely connected to impressionist painting, as they rely on subjective rather than objective perception. This image, Wales maintains, was also likely to meet the expectation of the readers of the time – the mental image they may have had of the place – and, by resorting to analogies with England, it fostered for the readers a process of familiarisation with the foreign location. In his analysis of the same passage, Short focuses instead on the use of listings and their cognitive implications. By showing

how Dickens seems to employ lists to convey an overwhelming and chaotic feeling, Short maintains that the stylistic techniques reproduce the writer's own experience of the city, thus confirming Wales's point concerning Dickens's impressionist-style writing. The effects of listings are then further explored in how they impact on our interaction with the text, with a process of 'enactment' (Leavis, 1952) in which the reader re-experiences, by analogical reflection, the author's feelings.

Short's argument, which also proposes a re-discussion of deictic shift theory, paves the way for the following chapter in the collection, Catherine Emmott's examination of metalepsis in Elspeth Davie's *A Map of the World*. Emmott digs further into the reader-text interaction drawing on her 'contextual frame theory' (Emmott, 1994, 1997), as well as on a set of cognitive, linguistic and narratological theories exploring how readers become 'transported' or 'immersed' into the world of fiction. The sophisticated metalepsis in Davie's novel, in which characters become transported into imagined foreign landscapes, allows Emmott to single out and disentangle a set of key cognitive and narrative mechanisms: the intricate building of (story)worlds and sub-worlds, the multiple types of deictic shifts, as well as the different degrees of granularity (the amount of detail provided to the reader) of the story and the permeability of the narrative levels. The following essay establishes significant connections with the previous ones, as Lars Bernaerts focuses, like Emmott, on a text showing unconventional features to disclose important dynamics of our interaction with the fictional world and the cognitive act of reading. Bernaerts examines Ivo Michiels's *Orchis Militaris* with the intention of putting Emmott's contextual frame theory to the test, especially in relation to her analogy of the reader as a blind person who collects cues to build and orient himself/herself in the narrative world. The experience of blindness conveyed in the novel offers a poignant perceptual mirror to that of the reader's and is made more complex by the text's experimental nature: as Bernaerts demonstrates, the use of syntax, tropes and deictic shifts amplifies the reader's disorientation, leading him/her to a process of spatial abstraction which has relevant interpretative implications.

While Bernaerts's multi-levelled analysis focuses on the narrative building of space, a cognitive process which has been long overlooked in favour of the analysis of narrative time, two other chapters focus on how time and space converge and interact in the leading notion of the volume – that of landscape. Judit Zerkowitz examines translations into English of the Hungarian poem 'How others see ...' by Miklós Radnóti to single out the link between landscape and identity, namely how focalisation reveals landscape in the poem as an inner, rather than external, space. The analysis of the transformation of the deictic structure of place and time in translation allows Zerkowitz to suggest that the original poem should be read more as a general humanistic appeal, rather than in the patriotic terms traditionally attributed to it. Landscape, time and space are the objects also of Maria Langleben's examination of 'Bezhin Meadow' by I.S. Turgenev, which shows how the collateral motion of time and landscapes function as a thread tying the story together. Langleben carries out a linguistic examination of the temporal structure of the Russian original text to single out two systems (iterational and temporal) that reveal how time, landscape and skyscape interconnect in the story. Interestingly, the commanding role of time is not interpreted in the essay as a mere

narratological device, but rather as a key element to understanding Turgenev's reflections on nature and life.

Two further chapters in the volume focus on nature, employing, this time, the perspective of ecostylistics. Before proceeding with her examination of Amitav Gosh's *The Hungry Tide*, Elisabetta Zurru provides an extensive and useful overview of the aims and methodology of ecostylistics (Goatly, 2010), retracing how the discipline has recently emerged from the background of ecocriticism, ecolinguistics and stylistics. Zurru applies then the tools of Systemic Functional Grammar to the analysis of three extracts from the novel, thus offering linguistic corroboration of the claim that the agency of natural elements renders the text a key example of postcolonial ecology. Andrew Goatly's analysis of the *Poems* of Edward Thomas uses the tools of Systemic Functional Grammar to disclose how nature is represented as an active participant rather than a passive resource. As revealed by quantitative analysis, birds feature as the main Actors and Sayers in the poems, thus showing a blurring of boundaries between humans and nature. Finally, the essay by John Douthwaite shows many of the aims and methodologies of the volume at work. Douthwaite examines the first two paragraphs of the short story 'The Day of the Funeral' to disclose how Edith Wharton's indirect style foregrounds (Douthwaite, 2000) a critical reading of gender relations in the depicted society. Douthwaite's acute linguistic analysis reveals the dynamics of focalisation in the examined lines: third person narration encapsulates and alternates the point of view of the male character and that of an impersonal critical voice, thus subtly leading the reader to position himself/herself against the character and the male-dominant stance he embodies.

It is thus clear that all the essays share, via a variety of topics and methodologies, the same position: that is, they all consider minute, accurate, well-grounded linguistic analysis as pivotal to achieving results that extend well beyond the scope of the discipline. As clarified in the introduction, an ethical stance underpins the volume, namely the belief in 'the reading experience as critical process' (p.3), as well as the social commitment (directly or indirectly) underlying any act of investigation into cognitive (linguistic) processes. In line with this, the volume examines and interprets the concept of 'landscape' in a way that holds immediate relevance to key issues of contemporary society (as stated in the introduction: borders, community and ecology). Even more powerful, though, is the way the volume condenses, defines and redefines the field of stylistics, by retracing its history and development, as well as its essential focus on cognitive tools, to single out present and future duties and tasks of the discipline. As a result, the collection is essential reading both for those who are new to the field and those who are already at work in it, providing new tools (and motivations) for the linguistic exploration of literary and non-literary texts.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Douthwaite J (2000) *Towards a Linguistic Theory of Foregrounding*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Emmott C (1994) Frames of reference: Contextual monitoring and narrative discourse. In: Coulthard M (ed.) *Advances in Written Text Analysis*. London: Routledge, pp.157–166.
- Emmott C (1997) *Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goatly A (2010) Edward Thomas, the landscape of Nature, and ecostylistics. In: *Poetics and Linguistics Association Conference*, University of Genoa, Genoa, Italy, 20–25 July 2010.
- Leavis FR (1952) *The Common Pursuit*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Joe Bray, *The Language of Jane Austen*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2018; 182 pp.: ISBN 9783319721613, £79 (hbk) 9783319891507, £79 (pbk)

Reviewed by: Clara Neary, University of Chester, UK

It is tempting to assume that most of what can be said about the language use of one of the most canonical writers of modern times has already been said. However, Joe Bray's latest monograph, *The Language of Jane Austen* (2018), soon makes clear that a number of critical lacunae in Austen studies are yet to be filled. Firstly, Bray's identification of the point of view techniques employed across Austen's oeuvre, from her earliest juvenilia to her final unfinished novel *Sanditon*, illustrates her use of a much wider range of speech, thought and writing modes than scholarship has thus far acknowledged. Secondly, Bray's detailed analysis of such techniques and their effects demonstrates the oft-overlooked complexity and subtlety in Austen's use of point of view which, he argues, creates an ambiguity of perspective that is critical to the humour and wit commonly found in her works. Furthermore, the scholarly consensus that point of view is Austen's most remarkable stylistic feature has long presumed upon her use of a single, homogeneous point of view mode, an assumption that Bray systematically dismantles, leading him to question the very notion of narratorial omniscience. Finally, throughout, and particularly in the final three chapters, Bray's focus on identifying and interrogating long-held critical assumptions regarding Austen's stylistic techniques illustrates some problematic trends in previous scholarship.

In Chapter 2, Bray constructs the argument that functions as the backbone of the first part of the book, namely that 'claims of a single dominant, centralising, authoritative point of view in Austen's fiction' are fundamentally problematic and overlook the 'subtle flexibility and mobility of perspective' (p.4) which characterise her use of point of view. Drawing upon examples from *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, he illustrates that what most critics consider Austen's archetypal use of omniscient narration in the realist tradition is, in fact, a subtle kaleidoscope of varying point of view modes. For example, in the opening of *Pride and Prejudice*, the omniscient point of view which introduces Mr Bingley to the reader is quickly replaced, as the introduction moves to his friend Mr Darcy, by the focalised perspective of onlookers at the ball at which Mr Darcy is first glimpsed and at which he 'drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person'. As